

Wildlife Survey for the Huasna Site

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Re-development of some old oil well sites is being proposed on the Huasna site. A total of about 5 acres will be re-developed, which includes a couple of the old well pads, a terminal turn around area for oil transfer to trucks, and laying of new oil pipelines. Current access roads will also be re-graded. The site was active quite a number of years ago but was deactivated. Old oil wells, storage tanks, and pipelines still remain. Coyote bush, poison oak, and deerweed have reestablished themselves on the lower pad, the upper pad is still mainly bare ground with scattered coyote bush, and the terminal turn around area has very short grasses.

On 12 April 2007 I visited the sites with Erin Newman, representative for Excelaron LLC and the ranch owner, Lester Mankins.

The sites themselves are hardly prime wildlife habitat. The road to the sites, which pass through oak habitat, will be graded, widened where necessary, and have some of the vegetation cut back to accommodate vehicles. However, the upgrading of the road will not be extensive and should have little effect on wildlife. Larger vehicles will be required to reach the sites to do the re-development of the oil wells, but once in place, smaller pick-ups will make periodic excursions to check the sites. Thus, any disturbance to wildlife at the pads will be of short duration. Oil from these wells will be piped to the terminal turn around site and oil trucks will come there to load the oil.

The site itself is not particularly remarkable from the surrounding area, situated in similar extensive habitat. That is, one would not expect the sites themselves to be crucial to any wildlife species. The pads and the terminal turn around area continue to be low-grade habitat.

A review of the list of State and Federally Listed Endangered and Threatened Animals of California, as well as State Fully Protected Animals and State Species of Special Concern has been reviewed by me. Any species in these lists will be referred to as "listed species." There are no streams that could accommodate fish on the site. No amphibians, reptiles, or mammals falling within any of these categories are found in this area.

Birds range much more broadly, and some of these could be expected to pass through the area from time to time, but the site itself would not be crucial for their well-being. Most of the listed bird species that could visit the site are large predatory birds that would not be breeding on the site. These include Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), Golden Eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*), Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), and Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). Cooper's Hawk (Species of Special Concern) does breed in the area, using oak woodland, so it could possibly be in the area. However, the impact to the site is so local that the re-development of the site should have little to none effect.

California Spotted Owls (*Strix occidentalis*)--not to be confused with the Northern Spotted Owl that is conspecific) are know to breed locally. A number of years back, there was an unconfirmed report of a Spotted Owl along Suey Road, which is visible and just below the upper pad. I myself have seen Spotted Owls in the Stony Creek Campground of the Los Padres National Forest in oak canyon habitat like that on the site. The straight line distance from Stony Creek Campground to the site is about 11 miles. The California Spotted Owl (not listed as endangered or threatened) uses oak woodland patches in cooler canyons, unlike the Northern Spotted Owl (listed as endangered) which uses old growth conifer forests. If any Spotted Owls are in the area, they could be temporarily disturbed by the heavy equipment used to prepare the sites for re-development of the oil pads. Heavy equipment will be brought onto the site periodically for short durations for usually less than a week at a time once construction is completed.